

# LETTER

FROM

The Rev. Mr ROBERT TRAILL,

Late Minister at EDINBURGH,

TO HIS

W I F E;

AS ALSO

One to his CHILDREN:

Both written by him in the time of his banishment.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ADVICE about some DUTIES.

*Published at the request of some friends.*

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M D C C L X I I.



A  
L E T T E R

F R O M

The Reverend Mr ROBERT TRAILL

T O H I S

W I F E.

*My dear and beloved Wife,*

**T**HE storm has scattered our poor family, and has driven me here to this strange land; and new storms arising do keep you that you cannot come to me here, and you know what hinders me from coming to you: but blessed be our Lord and our God, that we know that we may meet often before the throne in prayer and supplications one for another; and it is a mercy that we have yet leave to commune one with another in letters. I do often remember you, neither do I eat my solitary morsels without minding you, and thinks on the days when you and the children were about our table: but alas! the days of our liberty and peace were not improved by me as they ought and should have been; and now all that I can do in that land of my exile, next unto prayer for you, is to write you at this distance. The Lord, whose gift a good wife is, did choose you for me, and has made you a mother of six children unto me, and has preserved you to me a help and yoke-fellow unto this my old age, yea, has made you comfortable to me in my sufferings to which he has called me. It has been no small refreshing to my spirit to think that you do chearfully, and I hope comfortably, bear the part of these crosses which the Lord has laid upon me. I am fully persuaded, that if we can



take any loss that we have met with in the Lord's way, and for his honourable cause, joyfully and without murmuring, it shall turn to our good, and it shall well and abundantly be repaid by him, who gives the hundred fold even in this life, tho' with persecution. Fret not against unjust men, who have driven me so far away from you; but pray for them, that the Lord may give them repentance to the acknowledging of his truth and of their own backslidings from it. Ye know that they have done worse to others than to me: princes have been hanged by their hands, and they have shed the precious blood of faithful witnesses: and I am sure you would rather have me in the banishment far from you, than to have had me at home with you as a Bishop, or Dean, or time-serving minister. The longer you live, ye shall the more clearly see the Lord's hand to be wise and good in all that has befallen us: I hope his thoughts toward us are peace, and not evil, to give us an expected end. O pray for yourself and for me, that he who has given us, upon the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his name, would also give us grace that we may suffer chearfully, and would also carry us through cleanly and faithfully; he who hath called, yes, he who hath called us, also will do it. He sends no man a warfare on his own charges, and he fits and furnishes for suffering work, and bids us commit all the steps of our way unto the Captain of our salvation, even to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God,* Heb. xii. 2.

My dear wife, I intreat you to make your interest sure in him. You see that this world is a changing,



changing, evil world, and they that are troubled about the many things in it, have much careful trouble and much toil in seeking them; and when they have gotten their portion of them they are not satisfied, neither taste of any true joy in the enjoying them; and when they come to lose them, as sure they must at last, O what a disappointment do they meet with! and then they are as a dreaming hungry man that dreameth that he eateth, but when he awaketh his soul is empty, *Isaiah* xxix. 8. but chuse you the good portion that shall not be taken from you, *Luke* xi. 40, 41, 42. the world can neither give it nor take it away: it is the one thing needful; there is no more but to chuse it, and then it is yours, and is sure unto you; for your chusing of it is a sure and sweet evidence that the Lord has chosen it for you from all eternity, and therefore has made you to embrace his choice; for we have not chosen him first, but he has chosen us; because he has loved us with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness will he draw us: but we must take heed that the chusing of that good portion, even Christ, and grace, and glory, be serious, deliberate and fixed; and therefore we would do well often to renew it in the Lord's presence in our most serious hours, and to have our souls oft saying to him, *Thou art my God and my portion, and therefore will I trust in thee*, *Psal.* xvi. 2. *Lam.* iii. 24. There is nothing worth our pains but this; for in having this, we have that which will satisfy the desires of the immortal soul, and which shall through all eternity be the matter of our eternal song and joy; and having this, we shall have all other things that the Lord thinks needful for us, while we are upon our way heaven-ward. My dear heart, make earnest of religion: the most part that are

named Christians never make serious of Christianity; to know him and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, Philip. iii. 8, 9, 10. This is a blessed and sublime study: the greatest divines cannot go above it, and yet the weakest believer is allowed to enter upon it in Christ's school with the learnedest; for it must be he that must be our teacher; yea, it is he that has made it one article of the well ordered covenant, that we shall be all taught of God, and shall all know him from the least to the greatest; and it is therefore the poorest and weakest seekers of him who are long at their A, B, C, and profess little: he casts none out that come to him, and enter themselves under his teaching, neither did he ever put any away because of ignorance or dulness of learning, and in conceiving the great mysteries of the kingdom: if he take us in hand, we shall learn and profit; and if we offer ourselves to be taught by him, he will take us in hand as we are, and will make us better. You and I have a fair opportunity now to grow in acquaintance with Christ, for he has allured us to the wilderness to speak comfortably to our hearts; he has made us pass under his rod, that he may bring us within the bond of the covenant; he has abridged us as to our former enjoyments in the things of this world, that we may learn better than ever we did before to be crucified to the world, and to have the world crucified to us; that we may understand experimentally what that lesson means which the apostle teaches us, 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31. and that which Habakkuk won to, Hab. iii. 17, 18. Take courage, my dear heart: if our way be rough in our journey, and seemeth harder than it was, it is nearer to the end; there are not many steps to our journey's end; the Lord, our blessed and strong guide, lead us

us safely through the last step of it, through the dark valley of the shadow of death ! If he be with us in that hour, he shall enlighten our darkness, and we shall have a song in that night of the setting of the sun of this frail life, in hope of a fair morning and of an everlasting day. You and I could tell, if our memories could mind, and if our hearts were in a better frame to set them a-working to mention, the loving-kindness of the Lord, and much of his goodness and patience, whereby he has been following us all our lifetime to this day : we cannot but say, he has been doing us good and not evil all our days, though we have reputed him variable and very unkindly : he would take it very ill at our hand, if we should now come to call his love and kindness in question, after we have had so many years experience of it ; let us rather labour to believe, that he who has very tenderly and abundantly cared for us from the womb to this day, will not now leave us or forsake us when old age hath overtaken us : he who made us a family as a flock, and kept house for us, and with us, for so many years, will not now cast off the care of us, when unjust men have scattered us, and yet he knows that they found nothing against us but in the matters of our God, and yet men would needs scatter us, because we would not yield to forsake our good Shepherd, who had laid down his life for us, (and follow idol-shepherds, who seek pleasure and not the well of the flock,) whose eye is upon us where-ever we be driven in this cloudy and dark day, and whose hand will gather us again from all places where we have been scattered, and will exactly reckon with those idol-shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock, and will bring a wo and curse upon them, *Ezek. xxxiv.* throughout. But if we were looking more to the Lord's just hand



hand in all this that hath befallen us, we would not be discouraged: for albeit we may hold up our faces before men, and maintain our righteousness against them that have spoken evil against us, because we would not run on with them in the fearful backsliding, and because we would not say *a confederacy to all those to whom they said a confederacy*, neither would fear their fear, nor have any part with them who have robbed Christ of many of his royal prerogatives, to adorn poor dying, sinful clay with them; (but, alas, both thieves and reseters must answer sadly for this highest sacrilege, in the day when our Lord shall come to reckon for all the wrongs that have been done against Zion, and against her King!) yet could we not answer for one of a thousand, if the Lord should enter into judgment with us; for his hand is holy and just, even in that wherein men's hand is cruel and unjust; and that which is hard persecution against us, as it is from man, is a fatherly and just chastisement upon us as it is from God: and therefore our best course would be, to turn away our eyes from unjust persecuting men towards the just correcting hand of God, and to say as it is *Lam. iii. 39, 40.* Did not our misimproving of many days and years of prosperity justly deserve and require some years of trouble? If he had not seen that we were in danger of settling upon our lees, he would not have thus poured us from vessel to vessel; had he not seen our dross sticking so fast to us, we should not have met with such a hot furnace: but blessed be he who in faithfulness afflicts; who will not withhold the rod, when sparing of it would argue hatred to the child; who will not fail to set up his fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem, when he sees that the sons of love have such need of purifying, and that, unless the fire consume our dross, we are in danger ourselves of being consumed, *Jer. ix. 9.*

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The Lord brings it to that, that we may see, that as he has afflicted us in measure, and has not stirred up all his wrath against us, but in the day of his east wind has staid and restrained his rough wind; so we may in due time see, that by this the iniquity of Jacob shall be purged, and that this is all the fruit to take away sin, *Iſa. xxvii. 8, 9.*

And now, fearing lest I trouble you with so long a letter, I shall, in a few words, shew you what I mean.

1. I recommend to you, to acquaint yourself with the Lord, as he has revealed himself to you in his word, *Job xxii. 21, 22.* and seek his face in earnest and fervent prayer; for a right seeking and patient waiting will do you much good, *Luke xviii. 1,—9.* Let the word of God dwell richly in you, and often look into that glaſs which will both give you a sight of your own heart and ways, that you may lothe yourself: in them you see a sweet sight of Christ's kind heart towards humbled and mourning sinners, that you may love him, and seek to taste and see that he is good: and blessed are they that trust in him.

2. When now you are deprived of that large allowance of public ordinances which formerly you enjoy'd, be much in secret duties; he can make this morsel, eaten in secret, both sweet and strengthening unto you: next unto your bible, some good godly books, as worthy Mr Rutherford's letters, a book which has done much good unto some souls, and will do good to more, and that good little book of Mr William Guthrie's.

3. Have a care of the children, now, especially, I am so far removed from you and them: see what good you can do for their souls, in often praying for them, and admonishing them in the Lord, as you see their case doth require.

quire. You have some of them more ordinarily with you than the rest: let their time together be well improven. Have a care of *Margaret* your youngest daughter, whom the Lord keep with you now in your old age: warn her to seek the Lord early in the morning of her age; for those who seek him early shall find him: charge her to eschew the vanities and follies of a present evil world, and to walk and carry herself as becomes the daughter of a poor banished minister. I have some good hopes that the Lord who saved her from death here in *Holland*, and brought her safe home with you to the land where she was born, will glorify himself in his mercy and free grace toward her: the Lord grant that it may be so: I hope you and she both will join your Amen to this. You have your second son with you: he may be helpful to you and to the small remnant of that scattered family, that you have with you; and when his eldest brother shall return, he likewise will be helpful to you in family duties. I bless the Lord for them both, that he has begun to make himself known to their souls, and to incline their hearts to seek him, and to cleave unto him in this backsliding time: the Lord encrease his grace in them, and keep them stedfast in nearer communion with himself.

4. Be not troubled with perplexing thoughts about the world: the meek in the earth are waxing nearer to an end; and you see noway, in human appearance, how their place shall be filled up again. Believe, that he that provides well for his own that trust and wait on him, will make, that the barrel of meal shall not waste, nor the oil in the cruse fail, until the day that the Lord send the rain upon that poor land, *1 Kings 17. 14*. Has he not promised that those who walk uprightly before him, and whose confidence is in him, shall  
dwell



*well on high; the places of defence shall be the munition of rocks, their bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure? yea, your eyes shall yet see the King in his beauty, and ye shall yet again behold the land that for the present seems to be very far off. That scripture, Philip. iv. 6, 7. ought to be often and seriously meditated upon.*

*Lastly, I would entreat you, dear wife, to be much in chalking out, and trying your evidences for heaven, and often praying, that the Lord would write them clearly and distinctly on your heart, and would help you to read them, and to rejoice in them, or rather in him, who has made the purchase for you, and freely given you the evidence of it: he knows that it would be no small comfort in this my old age; and I am persuaded yet to hope to see you and the Lord's Jerusalem in that land in peace, before I see death. But this would much sweeten the delay, and this though it were till death, to have the lively hope that ye and I shall enjoy the Jerusalem that is above, where righteousness and peace dwell, and where no storm can come to scatter us again. Pray, pray for this to you and me, yea, and for all the children the Lord has given us. Sure I am there is room enough for us all there. O let us run to him who has gone thither to prepare mansions for all whom the Father has given to him in the eternal decree of election, and for whom he has laid down his life as a price for our redemption! And we cannot better know that (even we, poor sinful wretched) we are of the blessed number, than by our coming to him to seek and find salvation in him, who has passed his word, yea, his oath on it, that he will cast none out that come to him; and he is a King of his word, and will not fail to perform what he has promised. Let us grip to these immutable things, his word  
and*

and his oath, in which it is impossible for him to lie, that we may have strong consolation, when we flee for refuge to the hope set before us. Now, I leave this on you; lay hold upon him who has tenderly cared for me all my lifetime, and has been in a special manner kind to me in this place of my exile, giving me now and then sweet feasts in this wilderness, for which I desire you may bless him: and cast all your cares upon him, for he will care for you: he is my God, and will be the God of my relations after me; and when I come to fall asleep, and to be taken off the stage, I hope there shall be a family serving the Lord in their generation better than ever I did in mine: himself grant that it may be so! The abundant grace of our Lord, and the sweet consolation of his blessed Spirit, be with you, my dear heart, and with the six children, and with the eldest daughter's children and husband. This is the frequent and fervent prayer of your loving husband,

ROBERT TRAILL.



